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"THERE IS NO ONE WRITING HORROR FICTION NOW WHO
CAN MATCH HIM."—WASHINGTON POST BOOK WORLD ONLINE

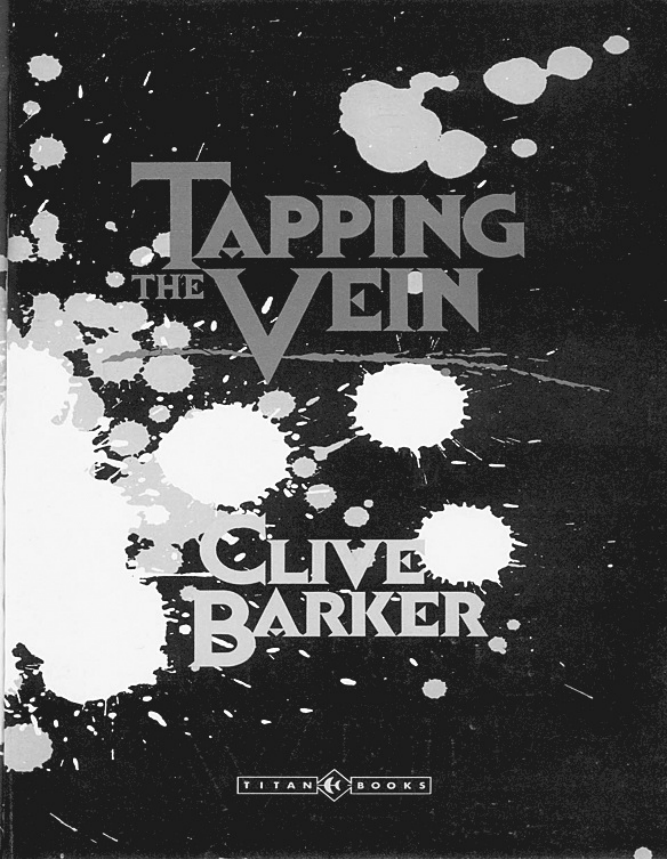
CLIVE BARKER



TAPPING THE VEIN

BOOK
THREE





TAPPING THE VEIN

CLIVE
BARKER

TITAN  BOOKS

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THE MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN

**Illustrated by Denys Cowan
and Michael Davis**

**Adapted by Chuck Wagner
and Fred Burke**

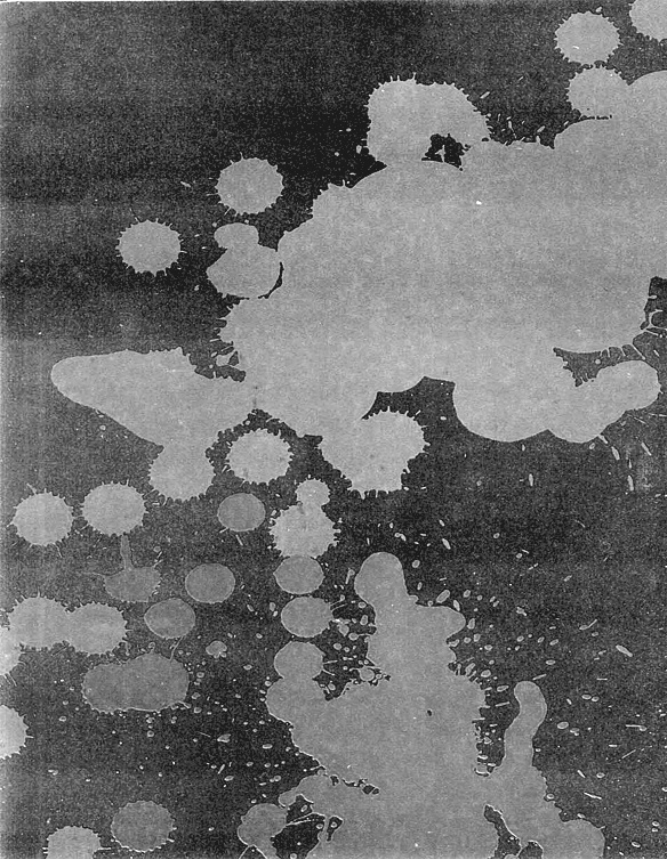
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SCAPE-GOATS

**Adapted and Illustrated by
Bo Hampton**

Lettered by Tracy Hampton



THE MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN

ILLUSTRATED BY
DENYS COWAN &
MICHAEL DAVIS

LEON KAUFMAN WAS NO LONGER NEW TO THE CITY. THE PALACE OF DELIGHTS, HE'D ALWAYS CALLED IT, IN THE DAYS OF HIS INNOCENCE.

BUT THAT WAS WHEN HE'D LIVED IN ATLANTA, AND NEW YORK WAS STILL A KIND OF PROMISED LAND, WHERE ANYTHING AND EVERYTHING WAS POSSIBLE.

NOW KAUFMAN HAD LIVED THREE-AND-A-HALF MONTHS IN HIS DREAM-CITY, AND THE PALACE OF DELIGHTS SEEMED LESS THAN DELIGHTFUL.

SO SHORT A TIME TO LOSE SO MANY TREASURED ILLUSIONS. AFTER LIVING WITH HIS OBJECT OF ADORATION, SPENDING HIS DAYS AND NIGHTS IN HER PRESENCE, SHE HAD LOST HER AURA OF PERFECTION.

HE HAD SEEN HER WAKE IN THE MORNING LIKE A SLUT, AND PICK MURDERED MEN FROM BETWEEN HER TEETH, AND SUICIDES FROM THE TANGLES OF HER HAIR.

IT WAS NO PALACE OF DELIGHTS.

NEW YORK WAS JUST A CITY.

The Palace

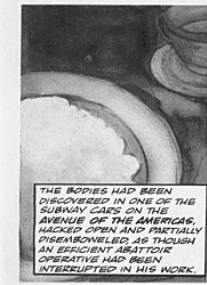
HE HAD SEEN HER LATE AT NIGHT, HER DIRTY BACK STREETS SHAMELESSLY COURTING DEPRAVITY.

DAILY GAZETTE
SUBWAY SLAUGHTER

IT BREED DEATH,
NOT PLEASURE.

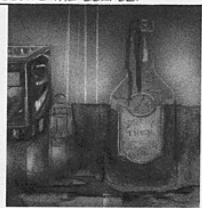


"SUBWAY SLAUGHTER" WAS THE CATCH-PHASE OF THE MONTH. ONLY THE PREVIOUS WEEK ANOTHER THREE KILLINGS HAD BEEN REPORTED.



THIS RECENT TRIO OF CORPSES WAS NOT THE FIRST TO BE DISCOVERED IN SUCH A STATE. THE FIRST VICTIM HAD BEEN COMPLETELY STRIPPED, EVERY SHRED OF CLOTHING, EVERY ARTICLE OF JEWELRY.

THE BODIES HAD BEEN DISCOVERED IN ONE OF THE SUBWAY CARS ON THE AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS, HACKED OPEN AND PARTIALLY DISMEMBERED, AS THOUGH AN EFFICIENT ABATTOIR OPERATIVE HAD BEEN INTERRUPTED IN HIS WORK.



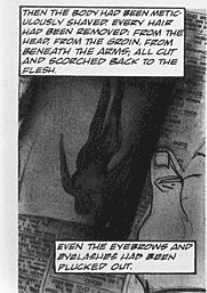
MORE BIZARRE THAN THE STRIPPING WAS THE NEAT AND SYSTEMATIC WAY IN WHICH THE CLOTHES HAD BEEN FOLDED AND PLACED IN INDIVIDUAL PLASTIC BAGS ON THE SEAT BESIDE THE CORPSE.

THEN THE BODY HAD BEEN METICULOUSLY SHAVED EVERY HAIR HAD BEEN REMOVED, FROM THE HEAR FROM THE GROIN, FROM BENEATH THE ARMS, ALL CUT AND SCORCHED BACK TO THE FLESH.



FINALLY, THIS ALL TOO NAKED SLAB HAD BEEN HUNG BY THE FEET FROM ONE OF THE HOLDING HANDLES SET IN THE ROOF OF THE CAR, AND A BLACK PLASTIC BUCKET, LINED WITH A BLACK PLASTIC BAG, HAD BEEN PLACED BENEATH THE CORPSE TO CATCH THE STEADY FALL OF BLOOD FROM ITS WOUNDS.

THERE HAD BEEN NO RAPE, NOR ANY SIGN OF TORTURE. THE WOMAN HAD BEEN SWIFTLY AND EFFICIENTLY DISPATCHED AS THOUGH SHE WAS A PIECE OF MEAT, AND THE BUTCHER WAS STILL LOOSE.



EVEN THE EYEBROWS AND EYELASHES HAD BEEN PLUCKED OUT.

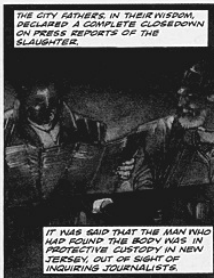


SHIT!



SHIT!

NO HARM
DONE.



THE CITY FATHERS, IN THEIR WISDOM,
DECLARED A COMPLETE CLOSDOWN
ON PRESS REPORTS OF THE
SLAUGHTER.

IT WAS SAID THAT THE MAN WHO
HAD FOUND THE BODY WAS IN
PROTECTIVE CUSTODY IN NEW
JERSEY, OUT OF SIGHT OF
INQUIRING JOURNALISTS.



BUT THE COVER-UP
HAD FAILED.



KAUFMAN FOUND HIMSELF
WONDERING IF THIS OAF,
WITH HIS FLORID CHEEKS
AND HIS UNCULTIVATED
BEARD, WAS CAPABLE OF
MURDER.

WANNANOTHER?



UH, I--

COFFEE.
REGULAR.
DARK.

IT'S A
COVER UP, ISN'T IT?
THEY KNOW WHO
DID IT.



THEY GOT THE EVIDENCE--
THEY'RE JUST KEEPING US IN
THE FUCKING DARK. THERE'S
SOMETHING DOWN THERE
THAT'S NOT HUMAN.

SEE, THEY DO ALL THIS
CLONING STUFF AND IT GETS
OUT OF HAND. THEY COULD BE
GROWING MONSTERS FOR
ALL WE KNOW.

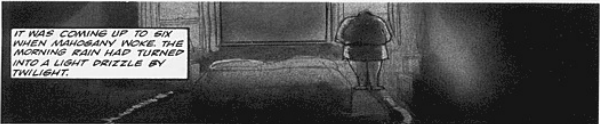
KAUFMAN FOUND THE MAN'S
CERTAINLY ATTRACTIVE.
MONSTERS ON THE PROWL.
SIX HEADS; A DOZEN EYES.
WHY NOT?



LAY YOU
ANYTHING.

HE KNEW WHY NOT, BECAUSE
THAT EXCUSED HIS CITY. THAT
LET HER OFF THE HOOK.

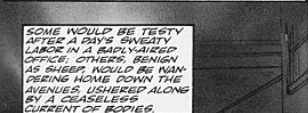
AND KAUFMAN BELIEVED IN
HIS HEART THAT THE MON-
STERS TO BE FOUND IN THE
TUNNELS WERE PERFECTLY
HUMAN.



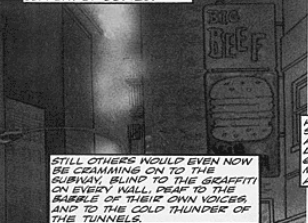
IT WAS COMING UP TO SIX
WHEN MAHOGANY WOKE. THE
MORNING RAIN HAD TURNED
INTO A LIGHT DRIZZLE BY
TWILIGHT.



AFTER A HARD DAY'S WORK NEW YORK WAS ON
ITS WAY HOME: TO PLAY, TO MAKE LOVE. PEOPLE
WERE STREAMING OUT OF THEIR OFFICES AND
INTO THEIR AUTOMOBILES.



SOME WOULD BE TESTY
AFTER A DAY'S SWEATY
LABOR IN A BADLY-AIRED
OFFICE; OTHERS, BENIGN
AS SHEEP, WOULD BE WAN-
DERING HOME DOWN THE
AVENUES, USHERED ALONG
BY A CEASELESS
CURRENT OF BODIES.



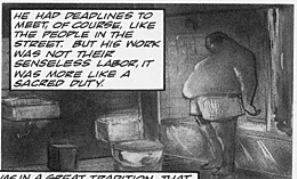
STILL OTHERS WOULD EVEN NOW
BE CRAMMING ON TO THE
SUBWAY, BLIND TO THE GRAFFITI
ON EVERY WALL, DEAF TO THE
BABBLE OF THEIR OWN VOICES,
AND TO THE COLD THUNDER OF
THE TUNNELS.



IT PLEASED MAHOGANY TO THINK OF THAT.
HE WAS, AFTER ALL, NOT ONE OF THE
COMMON HERD.



HE COULD STAND AT HIS WINDOW AND LOOK
DOWN ON A THOUSAND HEAPS BELOW HIM,
AND KNOW HE WAS A CHOSEN MAN.

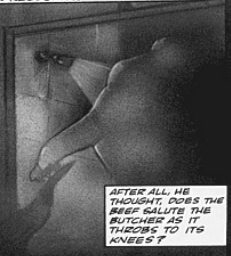


HE HAD DEADLINES TO
MEET, OF COURSE, LIKE
THE PEOPLE IN THE
STREET. BUT HIS WORK
WAS NOT THEIR
SENSELESS LABOR, IT
WAS MORE LIKE A
SACRED DUTY.



HE WAS IN A GREAT TRADITION, THAT
STRETCHED FURTHER BACK THAN
AMERICA. HE WAS A NIGHT-STALKER:
LIKE JACK THE RIPPER, LIKE
GILLES DE RAIS, A LIVING EMBODI-
MENT OF DEATH, A WRAITH WITH
A HUMAN FACE.

SOMETIMES MAHOSANY LONGED TO ANNOUNCE HIS IDENTITY TO THE WORLD, BUT HIS WAS A SECRET LIFE, AND IT WAS MERELY PRIDE THAT LONGED FOR RECOGNITION.



AFTER ALL, HE THOUGHT, DOES THE BEEF SALUTE THE BUTCHER AS IT TRODS TO ITS KNEEST

ALL IN ALL, HE WAS CONTENT. TO BE PART OF THAT GREAT TRADITION WAS ENOUGH. WOULD ALWAYS HAVE TO REMAIN ENOUGH.



RECENTLY, HOWEVER, THERE HAD BEEN DISCOVERIES. THEY WERENT HIS FAULT OF COURSE. NOBODY COULD POSSIBLY BLAME HIM. HE WAS GETTING OLD.

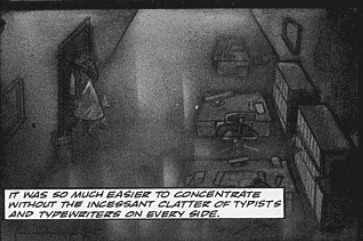


STILL, TONIGHT, LIKE EVERY OTHER NIGHT, HE HAD A JOB TO DO...

KAUFMAN HURRIED BACK INTO THE LOBBY WITH HIS SANDWICH.

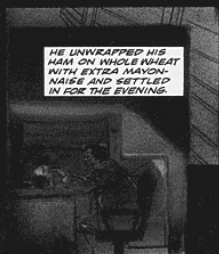


HE WOULD WORK UNTIL TEN, NO LATER.



IT WAS SO MUCH EASIER TO CONCENTRATE WITHOUT THE INCESSANT CLATTER OF TYPISTS AND TYPEWRITERS ON EVERY SIDE.

HE UNWRAPPED HIS HAM ON WHOLE WHEAT WITH EXTRA MAYONNAISE AND SETTLED IN FOR THE EVENING.



IT WAS NINE NOW. THE RAIN CLOUDS HAD CLEARED ENTIRELY. RAG PACKED. MAHOGANY WAS DRESSED FOR THE NIGHTSHIFT.

ABOVE ALL, HE REMINDED HIMSELF, HE MUST BE CAREFUL.

THERE WOULD BE EYES ON HIM EVERY STEP OF THE WAY, WATCHING HIS PERFORMANCE TONIGHT, AND JUDGING IT.

IF THEY ONLY KNEW, HE THOUGHT. THE PEOPLE WHO WALKED, RAN AND SKIPPED PAST HIM ON THE STREETS: WHO COLLIDED WITH HIM WITHOUT APOLOGY. WHO MET HIS GAZE WITH CONTEMPT: WHO SMILED AT HIS BULK, LOOKING UNEASY IN HIS ILL-FITTING SUIT. IF ONLY THEY KNEW WHAT HE DID, WHAT HE WAS AND WHAT HE CARRIED.

TONIGHT HE'D TAKE THE AVENUE OF THE AMERICAS AGAIN, HIS FAVORITE LINE, AND OFTEN THE MOST PRODUCTIVE.

THE SMELL OF THE TUNNELS WAS IN HIS NOSTRILS NOW.

NOT THE SMELL OF THE DEEP TUNNELS, OF COURSE. THEY HAD A SCENT ALL OF THEIR OWN.

THE REGURGITATED BREATH OF A MILLION TRAVELERS CIRCULATED IN THIS WARREN, MINGLING WITH THE BREATH OF CREATURES FAR OLDER; THINGS WITH VOICES SOFT LIKE CLAY, WHOSE APPETITES WERE ABOMINABLE. HOW HE LOVED IT. THE SCENT, THE DARK, THE THUNDER.

HE LINGERED IN THE STATION FOR OVER AN HOUR. THERE WAS SO LITTLE OF QUALITY AROUND IT WAS DISPIRITING.

HE HAD NOT SEEN A SINGLE CREATURE WHO WAS REALLY IDEAL FOR SLAUGHTER.

THE HEADLINE OF THE NEW YORK POST, DISCARDED ON THE SEAT ACROSS FROM HIM, CAUGHT MAHOGANY'S EYE: "POLICE ALL-OUT TO CATCH KILLER." HE COULDN'T RESIST A SMILE. AFTER ALL, WASN'T HIS CAREER SANCTIONED BY THE HIGHEST POSSIBLE AUTHORITIES?

THE VERY FORCES OF LAW AND ORDER THAT MADE SUCH A SHOW OF HIS PURSUIT SERVED HIS MASTERS NO LESS THAN HE; MAHOGANY WAS A PROTECTED MAN, ABOVE EVERY LAW ON THE STATUTE BOOKS.

KAUFMAN WAS NOT FINISHED BY ELEVEN, AN HOUR AFTER HE'D PROMISED HIMSELF RELEASE.

FUCK IT!

HE NEVER SPOKE IN COMPANY, BUT ONCE IN A WHILE TO SAY FUCK IT TO HIMSELF WAS A GREAT CONSOLATION.

IT WAS COLDER OUTSIDE THAN HE HAD ANTICIPATED, AND THE AIR BROUGHT HIM OUT OF HIS LETHARGY A LITTLE.

THE EXPRESS TO FAR ROCKAWAY.

HOME IN A HOUR.

NEITHER KAUFMAN NOR MAHOGANY KNEW IT, BUT AT 96TH AND BROADWAY THE POLICE HAD ARRESTED WHAT THEY TOOK TO BE THE SUBWAY KILLER.

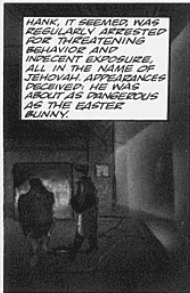
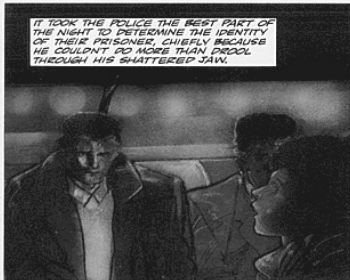
A SMALL MAN OF EUROPEAN EXTRACTION, WIELDING A HAMMER AND A SAW, HAD CORNERED A YOUNG WOMAN IN THE SECOND CAR AND THREATENED TO CUT HER IN HALF IN THE NAME OF JEHOVAH.

HE DROPPED THE HAMMER. SHE PICKED IT UP AND BROKE HIS LOWER JAW AND RIGHT CHEEK BONE WITH IT BEFORE THE MARINES STEPPED IN.

WHEN THE TRAIN HALTED AT 96TH THE POLICE WERE WAITING TO ARREST THE SUBWAY BUTCHER. THEY RUSHED THE CAR IN A HORDE, YELLING LIKE BANSHEES AND SCARED AS SHIT.

WHILE THE REST OF THE PASSENGERS (INCLUDING TWO MARINES) LOOKED ON, THE INTENDED VICTIM LANDED A KICK TO THE MAN'S TESTICLES.

THE WOMAN, AFTER QUESTIONING, WENT HOME WITH THE MARINES.





KAUFMAN WAS DRIFTING IN THAT WARM SOMEWHERE BETWEEN AWARENESS AND SLEEP, AND THERE WAS A FLUTTERING OF NASCENT DREAMS IN HIS HEAD IT WAS A GOOD FEELING. THE TRAIN WAS OFF AGAIN, RATTLING DOWN INTO THE TUNNELS.



HE DIDN'T SEE THE LIGHT FLICKER OFF IN THE SECOND CAR.

BUT MAYBE, AT THE BACK OF HIS DOZING MIND, KAUFMAN HALF-REGISTERED THAT THE DOORS BETWEEN THE SECOND AND FIRST CARS HAD BEEN SLID OPEN.

Whssss

MAYBE HE SMELT THE SUDDEN GUSH OF TUNNEL AIR, AND REGISTERED THAT THE NOISE OF WHEELS WAS MOMENTARILY LOUDER.

mnnnnph
SNIK
Thump

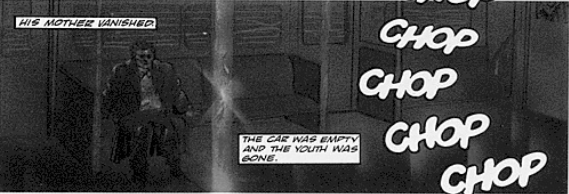
MAYBE HE EVEN HEARD THE SCUFFLE AS MAHOGANY SUBDUED THE YOUTH WITH THE SPACED-OUT STARE.

BUT THE SOUND WAS TOO DISTANT AND THE PROMISE OF SLEEP TOO TEMPTING. HE PROWSED ON.



FOR SOME REASON HIS DREAMS WERE OF HIS MOTHER'S KITCHEN. SHE WAS CHOPPING TURNIPS AND SMILING SWEETLY AS SHE CHOPPED.

CHOP
CHOP
CHOP
CHOP



HIS MOTHER VANISHED.

THE CAR WAS EMPTY AND THE YOUTH WAS GONE.

CHOP
CHOP
CHOP
CHOP



HOW LONG HAD HE BEEN DOZING? HE HADN'T REMEMBERED THE TRAIN STOPPING AT WEST 4TH STREET.

THE TRAIN SEEMED TO HAVE GATHERED QUITE A SUBSTANTIAL HEAD OF SPEED.

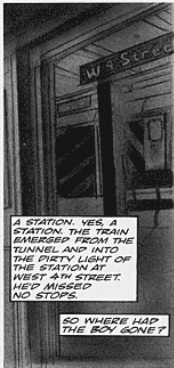
A LITTLE CONCERN CREEPT INTO KAUFMAN'S SOBER HEAD. PERHAPS THEY'D PASSED FAR ROCKAWAY AND THE TRAIN WAS NOW SPEEDING ON ITS WAY TO WHEREVER THEY TOOK TRAINS FOR THE NIGHT.



FUCK IT.

SHOULD HE GO FORWARD AND ASK THE DRIVER? IT WAS SUCH A BLOODY IDIOT QUESTION TO ASK: WHERE AM I?

THEN THE TRAIN BEGAN TO SLOW.



A STATION. YES, A STATION. THE TRAIN EMERGED FROM THE TUNNEL AND INTO THE DIM LIGHT OF THE STATION AT WEST 4TH STREET. HED MISSED NO STOPS.

SO WHERE HAD THE BOY GONE?



PROMBLY BETWEEN THE DRIVER'S LEGS. EVEN NOW KAUFMAN THOUGHT, HIS LIP CURLING. IT WASN'T UNHEARD OF.

THIS WAS THE PALACE OF DELIGHTS, AFTER ALL, AND EVERYONE HAD THEIR RIGHT TO A LITTLE LOVE IN THE DARK.



WHAT DID HE CARE WHERE THE BOY HAD GONE?

THE SUDDEN FEAR OF BEING LOST HAD SHARPENED HIS SENSES.



EVEN OVER THE TRAIN'S CLATTER, HE HEARD THE SOUND OF TEARING CLOTH COMING FROM THE NEXT CAR.

WAS IT RAPE?



WITH NO MORE THAN A MILD VOYEURISTIC URGE, HE MOVED DOWN THE SEE-SAWING CAR TOWARDS THE INTERSECTING DOOR, HOPING HE MIGHT GET A PEEK.

HIS EYES WERE STILL FIXED ON THE WINDOW, AND HE FAILED TO NOTICE THE SPATTERS OF BLOOD HE WAS TREADING IN. UNTIL--

"HIS HEEL SLIPPED."

BLOOD.

NOTHING WOULD MAKE THE WORD GO AWAY.

HIS MIND REFUSED TO ACCEPT WHAT HIS EYES WERE SEEING BEYOND THE DOOR.

BLOOD

HE HAD TO LOOK.

HE HAD TO.

HIS REASON SAID IT COULDN'T BE REAL, BUT HIS FLESH KNEW IT WAS.

KAUFMAN WAS UNCONSCIOUS WHEN THE TRAIN REACHED JAY STREET. HE WAS DEAF TO THE DRIVER'S ANNOUNCEMENT THAT ALL TRAVELERS BEYOND THAT STATION WOULD HAVE TO CHANGE TRAINS.

HAD HE HEARD THIS, HE WOULD HAVE QUESTIONED THE SENSE OF IT. NO TRAINS DISBURSED ALL THEIR PASSENGERS AT JAY STREET. HE WOULD HAVE ASKED WHAT KIND OF TRAIN THIS COULD BE. EXCEPT THAT HE ALREADY KNEW.

THIS WAS THE MIDNIGHT MEAT TRAIN.

THERE'S NO ACCOUNTING FOR TIME IN A DEAD FANT. IT COULD HAVE BEEN SECONDS OR HOURS THAT PASSED BEFORE KAUFMAN'S EYES FLICKERED OPEN AGAIN.

HE LAY UNDER ONE OF THE SEATS NOW, HIDDEN FROM VIEW. FATE WAS WITH HIM SO FAR HE THOUGHT: SOMEHOW THE ROCKING OF THE CAR MUST HAVE JOCKEYED HIS UNCONSCIOUS BODY OUT OF SIGHT.

HE THOUGHT OF THE HORROR IN CAR TWO, AND SWALLOWED BACK VOMIT. HE WAS ALONE.

KAUFMAN'S TEETH WERE SHAKING IN THEIR SOCKETS AND HIS FACE FELT NUMB WITH THE VIBRATION; EVEN HIS SKULL WAS ACHING.

WHICHEVER WAY HE TURNED, THE NAME ON THE DOOR WAS DEATH.

HE COVERED HIS HEAD WITH HIS HANDS AND CLOSED HIS EYES AS TIGHTLY AS ANY CHILD IN TERROR OF THE BOBBYMAN.

A RUSH OF AIR UP FROM THE RAILS. IT SMELT STRANGER THAN ANY KAUFMAN HAD SMELT BEFORE: AND COLDER. THIS WAS SOMEHOW PRIMAL AIR IN HIS NOSTRILS, HOSTILE AND UNFATHOMABLE AIR. IT MADE HIM SHUDDER.

KLK
whishh

THE BUTCHER WAS CLOSE, KAUFMAN KNEW IT. HE COULD BE STANDING NO MORE THAN A MATTER OF INCHES FROM WHERE HE LAY.

WAS HE EVEN NOW LOOKING DOWN AT KAUFMAN'S BACK? EVEN NOW BENDING, KNIFE IN HAND, TO SCOOP KAUFMAN OUT OF HIS HIDING PLACE, LIKE A SNAIL HOOKED FROM ITS SHELL?

NOTHING HAPPENED. HE FELT NO BREATH ON HIS NECK. HIS SPINE WAS NOT SLIT OPEN.

THERE WAS SIMPLY A CLATTER OF FEET CLOSE TO KAUFMAN'S HEAD, THEN THAT SAME SOUND RECEDING.

KAUFMAN'S BREATH, HELD IN HIS LUNGS 'TIL THEY HURT, WAS EXPELLED IN A RASP BETWEEN HIS TEETH.

MAHOGANY WAS ALMOST DISAPPOINTED THAT THE SLEEPING MAN HAD ALIGHTED AT WEST 4TH STREET. HE WAS HOPING FOR ONE MORE JOB TO DO THAT NIGHT, TO KEEP HIM OCCUPIED WHILE THEY DESCENDED. BUT NO: THE MAN HAD GONE.

THE POTENTIAL VICTIM HADN'T LOOKED THAT HEALTHY ANYWAY, HE THOUGHT TO HIMSELF, HE WAS AN ANEMIC JEWISH ACCOUNTANT PROBABLY. THE MEAT WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN OF ANY QUALITY.



MY CHRIST, I THOUGHT KAUFMAN, HE'S GOING TO KILL THE DRIVER!

HI.

HI.

THEY KNEW EACH OTHER.

ALL DONE F

ALL DONE.

WHICH WAS WORSE: STASIS AND MEETING HIS DEATH TRAPPED IN A HOLE; OR MAKING A BREAK FOR IT AND CONFRONTING HIS MAKER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE CAR?

HA HA HA
THERE WAS LAUGHTER NOW. KAUFMAN CALCULATED THE RISKS OF HIS SITUATION: THE MATHEMATICS OF PANIC.

KAUFMAN SURPRISED HIMSELF WITH HIS METTLE: HE'D MOVE.

BUT NO. KAUFMAN SKINNED HIS WAY THROUGH THE SLIT HE HAD OPENED AND SO THROUGH INTO THE BLOODY CHAMBER BEYOND.

WHAT THE FUCK'S THAT?

DIDN'T CLOSE THE DOOR PROPERLY. THAT'S ALL.

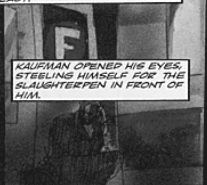
HA HA
THE NOISE OF THE RAILS INCREASED, AND A WAVE OF DANK AIR, STINKING OF NOTHING ON EARTH, CAME UP AT HIM. SURELY THE BUTCHER MUST HEAR, OR SMELL? SURELY HE MUST TURN--

REUFF MADE HIM CARELESS. HE FAILED TO LATCH THE DOOR BEHIND HIM.

KAUFMAN HEARD THE BUTCHER WALKING TOWARDS THE DOOR. HE CROUCHED, A BALL OF CONSTERNATION, AGAINST THE INTERSECTING WALL, SUDDENLY AWARE OF HOW FULL HIS BOWELS WERE.

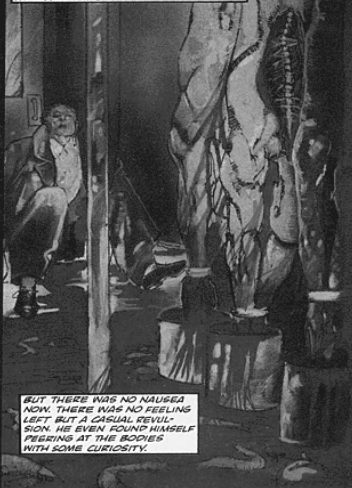


THE DOOR WAS PULLED CLOSED FROM THE OTHER SIDE, AND THE FOOTSTEPS RECEDED AGAIN. SAFE, FOR ANOTHER BREATH AT LEAST.



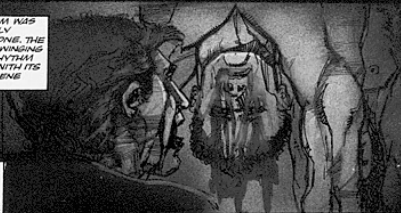
KAUFMAN OPENED HIS EYES, STEELING HIMSELF FOR THE SLAUGHTERPEN IN FRONT OF HIM.

THERE WAS NO AVOIDING IT. IT FILLED EVERY ONE OF HIS SENSES: THE SMELL OF OPENED ENTRAILS, THE SIGHT OF THE BODIES, THE FEEL OF FLUID ON HIS FINGERS, THE SOUND OF THE STRAPS CREAKING BENEATH THE WEIGHT OF THE CORPSES, EVEN THE AIR, TASTING SALTY WITH BLOOD. HE WAS WITH DEATH ABSOLUTELY IN THAT CUBBY-HOLE, HURTLING THROUGH THE DARK.



BUT THERE WAS NO NAUSEA NOW. THERE WAS NO FEELING LEFT BUT A CASUAL REVULSION. HE EVEN FOUND HIMSELF PEEKING AT THE BODIES WITH SOME CURIOSITY.

THE CARCASS CLOSEST TO HIM WAS THE REMAINS OF THE PIMPLY YOUTH HE'D SEEN IN CAR ONE. THE BODY HUNG UPSIDE-DOWN, SWINGING BACK AND FORTH TO THE RHYTHM OF THE TRAIN, IN UNISON WITH ITS THREE FELLOWS, AN OBSCENE FANGE MACABRE.



BEYOND THAT BODY WERE THE STRING-UP CORPSES OF TWO YOUNG WHITE WOMEN AND A DARKER SKINNED MALE. KAUFMAN TURNED HIS HEAD ON ONE SIDE TO LOOK AT THEIR FACES. THEY WERE QUITE BLANK. ONE OF THE GIRLS WAS A BEAUTY.

THE CAR JOLTER. ONE OF THE WOMEN'S BODIES TURNED AROUND, PRESENTING A DORSAL VIEW.

HE WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THIS LAST HORROR...



...IT WAS THE FINAL TRIUMPH OF THE RUTCHER'S CRAFT.

KAUFMAN ALMOST SMILED AT THE PERFECTION OF ITS HORROR. HE FELT AN OFFER OF INSANITY TICKLING THE BASE OF HIS SKULL, TEMPTING HIM INTO OBSESSION, PROMISING A BLANK INDIFFERENCE TO THE WORLD.

UNDER HIS FEET, THE FLOOR WAS STICKY WITH DRYING BILE. EVEN WITH HIS EYES CLOSED TO CRACKS HE COULD SEE THE BLOOD IN THE BUCKETS TOO CLEARLY: IT WAS THICK AND HEAVY, FLECKS OF GRIT TURNING IN IT.

THEN THE LIGHTS WENT OUT.



FUCK IT.



ALL HE HAD TO DO WAS RUN THIS GAUNTLET OF ATROCITIES.

JESUS CHRIST.

THE TRAIN LURCHER
AND KAUFMAN
LOST HIS BALANCE.

IN THE UTTER
BLACKNESS HE
REACHED OUT FOR
SUPPORT AND HIS
FLAILING ARMS
ENCOMPASSED
THE BODY BESIDE
HIM.

BEFORE HE COULD PREVENT
HIMSELF HE FELT HIS HANDS
SINKING INTO THE LUKEWARM
FLESH, AND HIS FINGERS
GRASPING THE OPEN EDGE OF
MUSCLE ON THE DEAD
WOMAN'S BACK, HIS FINGER-
TIPS TOUCHING THE BONE OF
HER SPINE. HIS CHEEK WAS
LAIN AGAINST THE BALD
FLESH OF THE THIGH.

EAVAGH!

THE LIGHTS FLICKERED BACK ON.
KAUFMAN LOOKED DOWN THE
ABATOIR AT MAHOSANY.

YOU WERE
ASLEEP. I
SAW YOU.

YOU SHOULD
HAVE LEFT THE TRAIN.
WHAT WERE YOU
TRYING TO PUT HIPS
FROM ME?



GLANCING
AROUND FOR A
WEAPON,
KAUFMAN'S
GAZE FELL ON
THE FILE OF
CLOTHES
RESIDE THE
PUERTO
RICAN'S BODY.



AS IT IS,
I'LL HAVE TO
DO AWAY WITH
YOU.



FUCK
IT.

THE KNIFE
FELT GOOD
IN HIS HAND;
IN FACT IT
FELT
POSITIVELY
THRILLING.



YOU SHOULDN'T
HAVE BEEN THIS--
IT'S NOT FOR THE
LIKES OF YOU.

IT'S
SECRET.

HE WAS
FAST BEING
TERRORIZED
BY THIS
GROSS,
SHAMBLING
HULK.



WE ALL HAVE TO
DIE SOMETIME. YOU SHOULD
BE PLEASED--I CAN USE
YOU TO FEED THE
FATHERS.

FUCK
IT.

THE BUTCHER DIDN'T LIKE THE LITTLE MAN'S
INDIFFERENCE TO HIS WORK, HIS REPUTATION.

OH, SO HE'S THE
DIVINELY
INSPIRED TYPE,
THOUGHT
KAUFMAN. THAT
EXPLAINS
SOMETHING.



A DIRTY LITTLE JEW LIKE YOU
SHOULD BE THANKFUL TO BE
USEFUL AT ALL. MEAT'S THE
BEST YOU CAN ASPIRE TO.

WITHOUT WARNING,
THE BUTCHER SWUNG.

CHUD!

THE EXPOSED MEAT
OF THE THIGH WAS
LIKE PRIME STEAK,
SUCCULENT AND
APPETIZING.

THE BUTCHER STARTED
TO DRAG THE CLEAVER
OUT OF THE WOUND
AND IN THAT MOMENT
KAUFMAN SPRANG.

MAHOGANY FELT THE BLADE
IN HIS NECK AS A CHOKING
SENSATION, ALMOST AS
THOUGH HE HAD CAUGHT A
CHICKEN BONE IN HIS
THROAT. BLOOD ISSUED
FROM HIS LIPS, PAINTING
THEM, LIKE LIPSTICK ON
HIS WOMAN'S MOUTH.

MAHOGANY COLLAPSED TO HIS
KNEES, STARRING AT THE KNIFE
THAT HAD KILLED HIM. THE
LITTLE MAN WAS WATCHING
HIM QUITE PASSIVELY.

STRAIGHT THROUGH.
IN ONE STROKE.
STRAIGHT THROUGH.

THEN HIS BODY
COLLAPSED, AND
HIS HANDS, AND
HIS LIFE, AND HIS
SACRED DUTY
FOLDED UP UNDER
A WEIGHT OF
GREY FLESH.

THE BUTCHER WAS DEAD.

AND THE TRAIN
BEGAN TO SLOW.

CURIOSITY OVERTOOK KAUFMAN. WOULD THE TRAIN SHUNT INTO THE BUTCHER'S UNDERGROUND SLAUGHTERHOUSE, DECORATED WITH THE MEATS HE HAD GATHERED THROUGH HIS CAREER? AND THE LAUGHING DRIVER, SO INDIFFERENT TO THE MASSACRE, WHAT WOULD HE DO ONCE THE TRAIN HAD STOPPED?

WE'RE HERE, MAN. BETTER TAKE YOUR PLACE, EH?

THE TRAIN SLOWED TO A SNAIL'S PACE.

THE LIGHTS FLICKERED, THEN WENT OUT. THIS TIME THEY DIDN'T COME BACK ON.

WE'LL BE OUT IN HALF-AN-HOUR.

TAKE YOUR PLACE? WHAT DID THAT MEAN?

KAUFMAN WAS LEFT IN TOTAL DARKNESS.

THE DOORS WERE OPENING. A SMELL ENTERED THE CAR, A SMELL SO CAUSTIC THAT KAUFMAN CLAPPED HIS HAND OVER HIS FACE TO SHUT IT OUT.

HE STOOD IN SILENCE FOR WHAT SEEMED LIKE A LIFETIME. SEE NO EVIL. HEAR NO EVIL. SPEAK NO EVIL.

hhsssss

THERE WAS A FLICKER OF LIGHT, AND A WHISPER, TOO, FROM THE DARK OUTSIDE THE TRAIN, A GATHERING OF TINY NOISES LIKE THE VOICES OF BEETLES.

IN THE TUNNEL, SHUFFLING TOWARDS THE TRAIN, WERE HUMAN BEINGS.

KAUFMAN WAS TRAPPED

COULD THERE BE ANY DOUBT AS TO THE INTENTION OF THESE THINGS? THE BUTCHER HAD SLAUGHTERED MEN AND WOMEN AS MEAT FOR THESE CANNIBALS; THEY WERE COMING, LIKE DINERS AT THE DINNER-GONG, TO EAT IN THIS RESTAURANT CAR.



HE COULD NOT LOOK AWAY. NOT THAT TERROR FROZE HIM AS IT HAD AT THE WINDOW. HE SIMPLY WANTED TO WATCH.



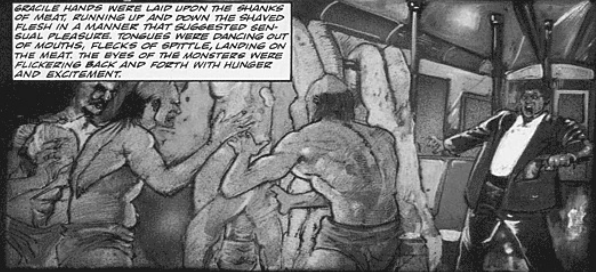
THE EFFORT OF CLIMBING INTO THE TRAIN MADE THE CREATURE'S BREATH COARSE. IT SEEMED MORE GERIATRIC THAN PSYCHOTIC; GENERATIONS OF FICTIONAL MAN-EATERS HAD NOT PREPARED KAUFMAN FOR ITS DISTRESSING VULNERABILITY.

THEY WERE COMING IN AT EVERY DOOR. THEIR PULPY, SYPHILITIC BODIES SCARCELY SEXED.



IT SOON DAWNED ON KAUFMAN THAT THE ROTTING FLESH SLINGING AROUND THEIR SHOULDERS, OR KNOTTED ABOUT THEIR MID-RIFTS, WAS MADE OF HUMAN SKINS.

GRACILE HANDS WERE LAID UPON THE SHANKS OF MEAT, RUNNING UP AND DOWN THE SHAVED FLESH IN A MANNER THAT SUGGESTED SENSUAL PLEASURE. TONGUES WERE DANCING OUT OF MOUTHS, FLECKS OF SPITTLE, LANDING ON THE MEAT. THE EYES OF THE MONSTERS WERE FLICKERING BACK AND FORTH WITH HUNGER AND EXCITEMENT.



EVENTUALLY ONE OF THEM
SAW KAUFMAN.

YOU.

KAUFMAN CALCULATED HIS CHANCES
THERE WERE SO MANY, BUT THEY
LOOKED SO WEAK, AND THEY HAD
NO WEAPONS, BUT THEIR SKIN
AND BONES.

THE MONSTER SPOKE AGAIN, ITS VOICE
QUITE WELL-MODULATED, WHEN IT
FOUND ITSELF, THE PIPING OF A ONCE-
CULTURED, ONCE-CHARMING MAN.

YOU
CAME AFTER
THE OTHER,
YES?

OLD
ANYWAY.

FUCK
YOU.

YOU MUST NOW DO
THIS FOR US. WE CANNOT
SURVIVE WITHOUT
FOOD.

IT DISGUSTS US NO
LESS THAN YOU. BUT WE'RE
BOUND TO EAT THIS MEAT,
OR WE DIE. GOD KNOWS,
I HAVE NO APPE-
TITE FOR IT.

THE THING
WAS DROOLING
NEVERTHELESS.

KAUFMAN REMEMBERED
THE BEARDED MAN IN
THE DELI. THE TALK OF
MONSTERS...

WHAT ARE
YOU ARE YOU
ACCIDENTS OF
SOME KIND?

WE ARE
THE CITY FATHERS,
AND MOTHERS, AND
DAUGHTERS, AND
SONS. THE BUILDERS,
THE LAWMAKERS. WE
MADE THIS CITY.

NEW
YORK
?

BEFORE
YOU WERE BORN.
BEFORE ANYONE
LIVING WAS
BORN.

"YOU WILL BRING US MORE, MORE MEAT
FOR US. THE OTHER ONE WAS WEAK."

"ME? FEED YOU?"

"YOU MUST DO IT FOR US,
AND FOR THOSE OLDER
THAN US. FOR THOSE
BORN BEFORE THE CITY
WAS THOUGHT OF WHEN
AMERICA WAS A
TIMBERLAND AND
DESERT."

KAUFMAN'S GAZE FOLLOWED
THE POINTING FINGER INTO THE
GLOOM. THERE WAS SOMETHING
ELSE OUTSIDE THE TRAIN WHICH
HE'D FAILED TO SEE BEFORE;
MUCH BIGGER THAN ANYTHING
HUMAN.

GO
ON.

KAUFMAN THOUGHT OF THE CITY HE'D LOVED. WERE
THESE REALLY ITS ANCIENTS, ITS PHILOSOPHERS,
ITS CREATORS? HE HAD TO BELIEVE IT.

PERHAPS THERE WERE PEOPLE ON THE SURFACE--
BUREAUCRATS, POLITICIANS, AUTHORITIES OF EVERY
KIND -- WHO KNEW THIS HORRIBLE SECRET AND
WHOSE LIVES WERE DEDICATED TO PRESERVING
THESE ABOMINATIONS, FEEDING THEM, AS
SAVAGES FEED LAMBS TO THEIR GODS.

THERE WAS A HORRIBLE
FAMILIARITY ABOUT THIS
RITUAL. IT RANG A BELL--
NOT IN KAUFMAN'S CON-
SCIOUS MIND, BUT IN HIS
DEEPER, OLDER SELF.

IT WAS THERE, THE
PRECURSOR OF MAN,
THE ORIGINAL AMER-
ICAN, WHOSE
HOMELAND THIS WAS
BEFORE PASSAMA-
QUODDY OR CHEYENNE.
ITS EYES, IF IT HAD
EYES, WERE ON
HIM.

HE FELL TO HIS KNEES BEFORE
THE FATHER OF FATHERS.



RRRRRRRR.R...

HAD THERE BEEN SUFFICIENT LIGHT
IN THAT PIT TO SEE THE WHOLE,
PERHAPS HIS TEPID HEART WOULD
HAVE BURST.



KAUFMAN COULD LOOK NO LONGER. EVERY PART OF HIS BODY SEEMED TO BE WEEPING BUT HIS EYES THEY WERE TOO HOT WITH THE SIGHT BEHIND HIM; THEY BOILED HIS TEARS AWAY.



HE TURNED AWAY AND WALKED BACK TO THE TRAIN. THE CREATURES HAD ALREADY SET ABOUT THEIR SUPPER.



SERVE
UST



HE WAS STILL HOLDING IT. THE BUTCHER'S SYMBOL OF OFFICE.

IT WAS A THIN REFLECTION, BUT KAUFMAN COULD SEE QUITE WELL ENOUGH HOW CHANGED HE WAS. WHITER THAN ANY LIVING MAN SHOULD BE, COVERED IN GRIME AND BLOOD.

662VG.

662VG...

KAUFMAN HAD NO WILL LEFT TO REPEL THE ATTACK. TOO LATE HE REALIZED THE INTENTION OF THE FINGERS--

URRRRRK

...IN
SILENCE.

HOME.

THE TRAIN BEGAN TO MOVE.

KAUFMAN LAY ON THE FLOOR, TEARS POURING DOWN HIS FACE, TEARS OF DISCOMFITURE AND REGNATION. HE WOULD BLEED TO DEATH, HE DECIDED, WHERE HE LAY. IT WOULDN'T MATTER IF HE DIED. IT WAS A FOUL WORLD ANYWAY.

TIME PASSED. HE
WASN'T DEAD.

KAUFMAN TRIED TO SAY
SOMETHING, BUT HIS MOUTH
WAS SEALED UP WITH DRIED
BLOOD. HE JERKED HIS
HEAD AROUND LIKE A DRIN-
KELLER TRYING TO SPIT OUT
A WORD. NOTHING CAME
BUT GRUNTS.

YOU GOT
A JOB TO
DO, MY MAN.
THEY'RE VERY
PLEASED
WITH YOU.

LOTS TO LEARN
BEFORE TOMORROW
NIGHT.

LOTS TO LEARN.
LOTS TO LEARN.

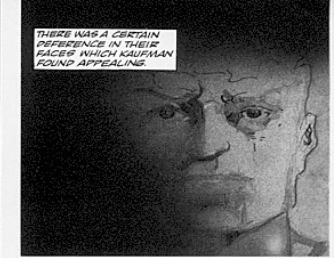
THEY WERE IN A STATION HE HAD EVER SEEN BEFORE--
A STATION-KEEPER'S NIRVANA. NO GRAFFITI, NO TOKEN-
BOOTH, NO GATES, NO PASSENGERS.

THIS WAS A LINE
THAT PROVIDED
ONLY ONE SERVICE:
THE MIDNIGHT
MEAT TRAIN.

A RAIN OF DAWN LIGHT WAS POURING THROUGH A GRATING
IN THE ROOF OF THE STATION. NOTES OF DUST HUNG IN
THE BEAMS, TURNING OVER AND OVER. KAUFMAN
WATCHED THEM, ENTRANCED. HE HADN'T SEEN SUCH A
BEAUTIFUL THING SINCE HE WAS A CHILD. LOVELY
DUST. OVER AND OVER, AND OVER AND OVER.



I'D LIKE TO
INTRODUCE MAHOGANY'S
REPLACEMENT. OUR
NEW BUTCHER.

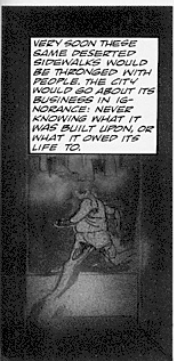


THERE WAS A CERTAIN
PREFERENCE IN THEIR
FACES WHICH KAUFMAN
FOUND APPEALING.



IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL DAY. THE BRIGHT SKY OVER
NEW YORK WAS STREAKED WITH FILAMENTS OF
PALE PINK CLOUD, AND THE AIR SMELT
OF MORNING.

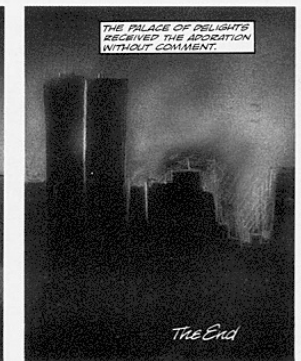
THE STREETS AND AVENUES
WERE PRACTICALLY EMPTY. AT
A DISTANCE AN OCCASIONAL
CAB CROSSED AN INTERSECTION,
ITS ENGINE A WHISPER; A
RUNNER SWEATED PAST ON THE
OTHER SIDE OF THE STREET.



VERY SOON THESE
SAME DESERTED
SIDEWALKS WOULD
BE THROGGLED WITH
PEOPLE. THE CITY
WOULD GO ABOUT ITS
BUSINESS IN IG-
NORANCE! NEVER
KNOWING WHAT IT
WAS BUILT UPON, OR
WHAT IT OWED ITS
LIFE TO.



WITHOUT HESITATION,
KAUFMAN FELL TO HIS
KNEES AND KISSED
THE DIRTY CONCRETE
WITH HIS BLOODY LIPS,
SILENTLY SWEARING
HIS ETERNAL LOYALTY
TO ITS CONTINUANCE.



THE PALACE OF DELIGHTS
RECEIVED THE ADORATION
WITHOUT COMMENT.

The End



SCAPE GOATS

ADAPTED BY BO HAMPTON

IT WASN'T A REAL ISLAND THE TIDE HAD CARRIED US ON TO, IT WAS A LIFELESS MOUND OF STONES.

ISLANDS ARE OASES IN THE SEA, GREEN AND ABUNDANT.

THIS IS A FORSAKEN PLACE: NO SEALS IN THE WATER AROUND IT, NO BIRDS IN THE AIR ABOVE IT.

I CAN THINK OF NO USE FOR A PLACE LIKE THIS EXCEPT THAT YOU COULD SAY OF IT: I SAW THE HAZARD OF NOTHING AND SURVIVED.

IT'S NOT ON ANY OF THE CHARTS.

IT WAS, AS RAY HAD SAID, AN EMPTY SPOT ON THE MAP, JUST PALE BLUE SEA WITHOUT THE MEREST SPECK TO SIGN THE EXISTENCE OF THIS ROCK.

JONATHAN WAS JUBILANT OF COURSE, THE BLAME FOR OUR BEING HERE WASN'T HIS ANY LONGER, IT WAS THE MSP-MAKER'S.

YOU CAN'T AVOID A PLACE THAT DOESN'T EXIST, CAN YOU, RAY?...

I MEAN, CAN YOU?

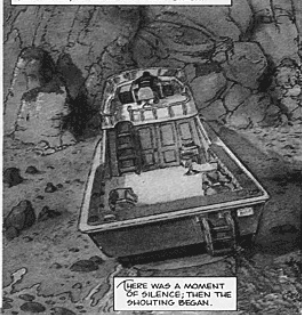
THE APOLOGETIC EXPRESSION HE'D WORN SINCE OUR UNSCHEDULED ARRIVAL WAS REPLACED WITH A LOOK OF SELF-SATISFACTION.

IT'D BEEN IN THE GALLEY PREPARING BREAKFAST...



... WHICH HAD BECOME MY RESPONSIBILITY SINCE NEITHER ANGELA NOR JONATHAN SHOWED ANY ENTHUSIASM FOR THE TASK...

... WHEN THE HULL OF THE "EMMANUELLE" GRATED ON SHINGLE, THEN PLOUGHED HER WAY, JUDGING, UP ON TO THE STONY BEACH.



THERE WAS A MOMENT OF SILENCE; THEN THE SHOUTING BEGAN.

I CLIMBED UP OUT OF THE GALLEY TO FIND JONATHAN STANDING ON DECK, GRINNING SHEEPISHLY AND WAVING HIS ARMS AROUND TO SEMAPHORE HIS INNOCENCE.



BEFORE YOU ASK... I DON'T KNOW NOW IT HAPPENED! ONE MINUTE WE WERE JUST COASTING ALONG—

OH, JESUS CHRIST ALL-FUCKING MIGHTY!

RAY WAS CLAMBERING OUT OF THE CABIN AND LOOKING MUCH THE WORSE FOR A NIGHT IN A BUNK WITH ANGELA...



BEFORE YOU ASK—

IT WAS SO SURREN RAYMOND...

... I MEAN IN THIS MIST...

SHUT THE HELL UP!

IT GAVE ME NO SMALL SATISFACTION TO HEAR JONATHAN SLANGED; I EVEN HOPED RAY WOULD LOSE HIS COOL ENOUGH TO BLOODY THAT PERFECT NOSE.





IT WAS BARELY TWO HOURS AFTER DAWN, AND THE MIST THAT HAD SHROUDED THIS ISLAND FROM JONATHAN'S VIEW STILL COVERED THE SUN.

IF TODAY WAS ANYTHING LIKE THE WEEK THAT WE'D HAD SO FAR, BY NOON THE DECK WOULD BE TOO HOT TO STEP ON BAREFOOT...

... BUT THIS MORNING THE CHILL PROVE ME BACK BELOW TO FIND A SWEATER.



THERE WAS NO WIND! THE COLD WAS COMING UP OUT OF THE SEA...

...IT'S STILL *NIGHT* DOWN THERE...



...JUST A FEW YARDS OFF THE BEACH...

... LIMITLESS NIGHT.



BACK ON DECK, THE MAPS WERE OUT, AND RAY WAS BENDING OVER THEM.



JONATHAN GLANCED AT ME, TRYING A SMILE...

HE HAD THIS ILLUSION, POOR JONATHAN, THAT HIS FACE COULD CHARM A TORTOISE OUT OF ITS SHELL.



TO ALWAYS THOUGHT HIS JEWISH GOOD LOOKS TOO BLAND TO BE BEAUTIFUL...

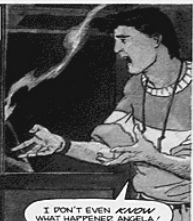
MY INDIFFERENCE WAS A RED RAG TO HIM.



A VOICE, SLEEPY AND POUTING, DRIFTED UP FROM BELOW DECK. *OUR LADY OF THE BLINK* WAS AWAKE AT LAST...

WHAT'S HAPPENING, RAY? WHERE ARE WE?

WE'VE GOT A BLOODY AWFUL NAVIGATOR, THAT'S ALL!



I DON'T EVEN *KNOW* WHAT HAPPENED, ANGELA!



WILL WE SHIT
FLOAT OFF? TAKE
A LOOK FOR
YOURSELF!



KNOWING HER, THAT'D TAKE
AN HOUR TO BREW. THERE
WAS TIME FOR A STROLL.

DON'T
GO TOO FAR,
LOVE!

NO.



LOVE, HE SAID
EASY WORD!

HE
MEANT
NOTHING
BY IT.



THE SUN STILL WASN'T GETTING THROUGH THE MIST PROPERLY. IT WAS FILTERING DOWN ON THE ISLAND FITFULLY AND ITS LIGHT FLATTENED EVERYTHING OUT...

...DRAINING THE PLACE OF COLOR OR WEIGHT, REPLACING THE SEA AND THE ROCKS AND THE RUBBISH ON THE BEACH TO ONE BLEACHED-OUT GREY. THE COLOR OF OVER-BOILED MEAT.

AFTER ONLY A HUNDRED YARDS SOMETHING ABOUT THE PLACE BEGAN TO DEPRESS ME, SO I TURNED BACK. ON MY LEFT LISPING WAVES CREEPT UP TO THE SHORE AND COLLAPSED WITH A WEARY SLOPPING SOUND ON THE STONES.

NO MAJESTIC ROLLERS HERE: JUST THE RHYTHMICAL SLOP, SLOP, SLOP OF AN EXHAUSTED TIDE.

I HATED THE PLACE ALREADY.

BACK AT THE BOAT, RAY WAS TRYING THE RADIO, BUT FOR SOME REASON ALL HE COULD GET WAS A BLANKET OF WHITE NOISE ON EVERY FREQUENCY.

FUNNY, ISN'T IT—

HILARIOUS.

—THERE'S NO FOG HORNS. MIST BUT NO HORNS. NOT EVEN THE SOUND OF A MOTOR... WEIRD!

HE WAS RIGHT. TOTAL SILENCE WRAPPED US UP, A DAMP AND SMOTHERING HUSH...

EXCEPT FOR THE APOLOGETIC SLOP OF THE WAVES AND THE SOUND OF OUR VOICES, WE MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN DEAF.

DAMN THIS PIECE OF SHIT!!



I WENT BELOW TO DO THE WASHING UP. JONATHAN JOINED ME, OBVIOUSLY STILL FEELING A LITTLE FOOLISH DESPITE THE BEHAVIOR.



ALL HE WANTED WAS TO BE TOLD I DIDN'T THINK THIS WAS HIS FAULT...

...AND YES, OF COURSE HE WAS A KOSHER APOLOGIST. I SAID NOTHING.



DO YOU MIND IF I LEND A HAND?

THERE'S REALLY NOT ROOM FOR TWO...

WHY DON'T YOU TAKE IN SOME SUN BEFORE IT GETS TOO HOT?



I FEEL LIKE A SHIT.



IT WAS AN ACCIDENT.

AN LITTER SHIT.



I SAID THERE WASN'T ANY ROOM, JONATHAN.

PROXIMITY MADE ME FEEL ALMOST CLAUSTROPHOBIC. HIS BODY WAS TOO LARGE FOR THE SPACE; TOO TANNER, TOO ASSERTIVE.



I WANTED TO TELL HIM TO LEAVE ME ALONE...



BUT THE LATITUDE OF THE PLACE SEEMED TO HAVE GOT INTO MY SYSTEM...

BEHIND HIM, THE STAIR CREAKED...



...AND I LOOKED OVER HIS SHOULDER IN TIME TO GLIMPSE KAY STARING DOWN AT JONATHAN'S BUTTOCKS AND AT THE TANGLE OF OUR ARMS.

DID HE SEE, I WONDERED, THAT I FELT NOTHING...



...DID HE UNDERSTAND THAT I DID THIS DISPASSIONATELY, AND COULD ONLY HAVE FELT A TWINGE OF DESIRE IF I SUBSTITUTED HIS HEAD, HIS BACK, HIS COCK FOR JONATHAN'S?



JONATHAN WAS STILL WORKING AT ME WITH DELIBERATE BUT UN-INSPIRED STROKES...

... A FROWN ON HIS FACE LIKE THAT OF A SCHOOLBOY TRYING TO SOLVE SOME IMPOSSIBLE EQUATION.

DISCHARGE CAME WITHOUT WARNING, SIGNALLED ONLY BY A TIGHTENING OF HIS HOLD ON MY SHOULDERS...



... AND A DEEPENING OF HIS FROWN.



SOUNDLESSLY RAY WITHDREW FROM THE STAIRWAY AND A MOMENT PASSED IN WHICH JONATHAN SAID HE LOVED ME.

His EYES FOUND MINE FOR A FLUSTERED MOMENT.



I WANTED TO KISS HIM BUT HE'D LOST ALL INTEREST.

WAS IT GOOD FOR YOU?

INDEED, IT WAS LAUGHABLE: THE WHOLE THING WAS LAUGHABLE...



STUCK IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE WITH THIS LITTLE BOY OF TWENTY SIX, AND ANGELA, AND A MAN WHO DIDN'T CARE IF I LIVED OR DIED.

BUT THEN PERHAPS NEITHER DID I.

I CHANGED AND FOLLOWED HIM UP ON DECK...

I THINK IT'S LIFTED A BIT.

HAS IT?

WHERE ARE THE OTHERS?

EXPLORING.

I STILL FEEL LIKE A SHIT.



BUT EARLY FOR DRINKING ISN'T IT?

WANT SOME?

IT'S NOT EVEN ELEVEN!

WHO CARES?





I DID SEE SOMETHING IN THE WATER... BROWN COLORED, WRINKLED, TURNING OVER.

IT'S A SEAL.

I DON'T THINK SO.



I DIDN'T WANT TO MOVE, BUT HE HAULED ME UP BY THE ARM.

IT WASN'T WORTH ARGUING. HIS BREATH WAS INFLAMMABLE.



EVERY FEW YARDS WE'D HAVE TO NEGOTIATE A LINE OF STINKING SEAWEED.



IT WASN'T JUST KELP; THERE WAS THE USUAL DETRITUS WASHED UP ON ANY BEACHES...

...THE BROKEN BOTTLES, THE RUSTING COKE CANS, GLOBES OF TAR, FRAGMENTS OF CRABS.



AND CRAWLING OVER THESE STINKING PILES OF CRABS WERE INCH-LONG, FAT-EYED BLUE FLIES...



HUNDREDS OF THEM, BUZZING TO BE ALIVE AND ALIVE TO BE BUZZING.

IT WAS THE FIRST LIFE WE'D SEEN.



I WAS DOING MY BEST NOT TO FALL FLAT ON MY FACE AS I STEPPED ACROSS ONE OF THESE LINES OF SEAWEED. WHEN A LITTLE AVALANCHE OF PEBBLES BEGAN OFF TO MY LEFT...



THERE WAS NO VISIBLE CAUSE FOR THE EFFECT.

THE AVALANCHE STOPPED; RUN OUT OF ENERGY. THEN ANOTHER: THIS TIME BETWEEN US AND THE SEA...



SKIPPING STONES: BIGGER THIS TIME THAN THE LAST, AND GAINING MORE HEIGHT AS THEY LEAPT. PLOP. PLOP. DEAD NOISE. PLOP. PLOP.

THEN RAY APPEARED FROM BEHIND ONE OF THE BIG BOULDERS AT THE HEIGHT OF THE BEACH, BEAMING LIKE A LOON.



A FEW MORE PERILOUS MOMENTS AND WE REACHED HIM...



THE FIRST SHOCK.

ONCE WE GOT TO THE HEIGHT OF THE BEACH, WE WERE LOOKING DOWN ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND.

NO INHABITANTS, NO BOATS, NO SIGN OF HUMAN EXISTENCE...



THE WHOLE PLACE COULDN'T HAVE BEEN MORE THAN HALF A MILE ACROSS: BARELY THE BACK OF A WHALE...

BUT THERE WAS SOME
LIFE HERE. THAT WAS
THE SECOND SHOCK.

IN THE SHELTERING RING OF THE LARGE,
BALD Boulders, WHICH CROWNED THE
ISLAND WAS A FENCED-IN COMPOUND.

INSIDE THE PEN THERE WAS A PATCH
OF COARSE GRASS, AND ON THIS
PITIFUL LAMIN STOOD THREE SHEEP.

MEET ANGELA.

SHEEP!

SO
WHAT?

IT'S
CRUEL!

IT HAD TO AGREE:
IT SEEMED POS-
ITIVELY SADISTIC,
LOCKING UP THESE
CREATURES WITH-
OUT MORE THAN A
FEW BLADES OF
GRASS TO CHEW ON,
AND A BATTERED
TIN BATH OF STAG-
NANT WATER TO
QUENCH THEIR
THIRST.

WELL, IT'S
STRANGE, ISN'T
IT? THREE SHEEP
IN THE MIDDLE OF
A LITTLE PLACE
LIKE THIS?

I'VE
GUT MY
FOOT.

THERE'S
GLASS ON THE
BEACH.

THEY'RE
SO DEAD-
PAN. NATURE'S
STARES STRAIGHT
MEN.

CURIOUSLY, THEY
DIDN'T LOOK SO UN-
HAPPY WITH THEIR
CONDITION; THEIR
STARES WERE
PHILOSOPHICAL.

RAY HAD LOST
INTEREST IN THE
BUSINESS. HE WAS
WANDERING BACK
DOWN THE BEACH,
KICKING A CAN
AHEAD OF HIM...

IT REMINDED ME
OF THE STONES.

WE
SHOULD
LET THEM
FREE...

JUST THREE GREY
SHEEP WAITING
TO DIE.

I IGNORED HER.
WHAT WAS
FREEDOM IN
A PLACE LIKE
THIS?





YOU'RE DRUNK.

AND YOU'RE STUPID...

... BUT I'LL BE SOBER IN THE MORNING.

YOU'RE A BASTARD WHEN YOU WANT TO BE.

THE OLD LINES STILL MADE THEIR MARK. SHE WAS, WHEN IT CAME DOWN TO VERBAL FISTCUFFS, EASY MEAT.



I ALMOST FELT SOME SYMPATHY FOR HER.



BETTER BE FRIENDS THEN I WON'T BE A BASTARD TO YOU.



YOU DON'T SCARE ME.

I KNOW.

HE MUTTON WAS STARING AT ME AGAIN. I STARED BACK.



FUCKING SHEEP.



THEY CAN'T HELP IT.

IF THEY HAD ANY DECENTY THEY'D SLIT THEIR UGLY FUCKING THROATS.



I'M GOING BACK TO THE BOAT.

UGLY FUCKERS!

COMING?



DON'T GO. STAY. THEY WON'T INTERRUPT US THIS TIME.

YOU KNEW?

YOU MEAN ABOUT RAY? OF COURSE I KNEW. I THOUGHT WE PUT ON QUITE A PERFORMANCE.



THE SMELL OF HIM BROUGHT BACK THE GALLERY, HIS FEOWN, HIS MUTTERED PROFESSION ("LOVE YOU"), THE QUIET RETREAT.

DEJA VU.

STILL, WHAT WAS THERE TO DO ON A DAY LIKE THIS BUT GO ROUND IN THE SAME DEEPLY CIRCLE, LIKE THE SHEEP IN THE PEN? ROUND AND ROUND...

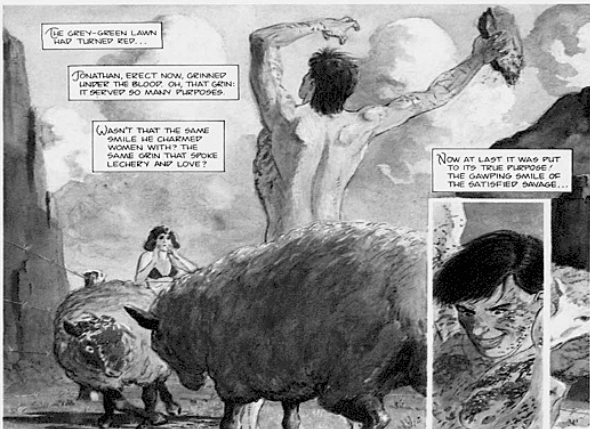


THE GREY-GREEN LAWN
HAD TURNED RED...

JONATHAN, ERECT NOW, GRINNED
UNDER THE BLOOD. OH, THAT GRIN:
IT SERVED SO MANY PURPOSES.

WASN'T THAT THE SAME
SMILE HE CHARMED
WOMEN WITH? THE
SAME GRIN THAT SPOKE
LECHERY AND LOVE?

NOW AT LAST IT WAS PUT
TO ITS TRUE PURPOSE /
THE GAWPING SMILE OF
THE SATISFIED SAVAGE...



THEN, SLOWLY,
THE SMILE
DECAYED...

OF THROB OF NAUSEA
THREW HIS HEAD
FORWARD, PITCHING
HALF-DIGESTED GIN
AND TOAST OVER
THE GRASS.

FRANKIE!

JESUS.

...AS HIS SENSES RETURNED.

I DIDN'T WANT TO
COMFORT HIM—HE
WAS SIMPLY BEYOND
MY HELP.

POSSIBLE ISLAND.
VILE, STINKING,
INSANE ISLAND.

THE SMELL WAS STRONGER NOW! COMING UP OUT OF THE GROUND IN FILTHY WAVES. ALL I THOUGHT WAS HATE AS I STUMBLED ACROSS THE WEED AND FILTH...

... THEN A LITTLE PATTTERING OF PEBBLES LIKE BEFORE.

AS THEY ROLLED TO A HALT, A LARGER PEBBLE, FULLY SIX INCHES ACROSS, SEEMED TO MOVE SPONTANEOUSLY FROM ITS RESTING PLACE, AND ROLL DOWN THE BEACH.

WAS THERE SOME SORT OF ANIMAL - A CRAB MAYBE - UNDER THE BEACH, MOVING THE STONES? OR WAS IT THE HEAT THAT IN SOME WAY TWITCHED THEM INTO LIFE?

AGAIN: A BIGGER STONE - I WALKED ON, WHILE BEHIND THE RATTLE AND PATTTER CONTINUED; ONE LITTLE SEQUENCE COMING CLOSE UPON ANOTHER TO MAKE AN ALMOST SEAMLESS PERCUSSION.

IT BEGAN, WITHOUT REAL FOCUS OR EXPLANATION, TO BE AFRAID.





I HAD A SUDDEN, MORBID DESIRE
TO WALK ON THE BEACH AGAIN...

...ARMED WITH THIS
KNOWLEDGE, KICKING
OVER THE PEBBLES
IN HOPES OF TURNING
UP A BONE OR TWO.

WHERE
ARE YOU OFF
TO?

JONATHAN.

THE STENCH WAS CLEARER
NOW: THAT WAS THE
ACCURSED ODOR OF THE
DEAD...

JONATHAN WAS NOT TO BE
SEEN. I CALLED HIS NAME...



MY VOICE SEEMED TO EXCITE THE
FLIES. THEY ROSE IN SWEEPING
CLOUDS. JONATHAN DIDN'T REPLY.

I REALIZED I HADN'T TOLD ANGELA
AND RAY ABOUT THE DEAD SHEEP.

THEN I SAW HIM A FEW
YARDS AHEAD. HIS CHEST
WHITE, WIDE AND CLEAN.
EVERY SPECK OF BLOOD
WASHED OFF.

SECRET IT IS THEN...

WHERE
HAVE YOU
BEEN?

WALKING
IT OFF. TOO
MUCH GUN.

I RETURNED THE
SMILE, SPONTAN-
EOUSLY; HE'D SAID
HE LOVED ME IN
THE GALLEY...



...THAT COUNTED
FOR SOMETHING.

MAYBE THAT WAS A SECRET BETWEEN US FOUR: JONATHAN,
MYSELF, AND THE TWO SURVIVORS IN THE PEN.



BEHIND HIM A RATTLE OF SKIPPING STONES...

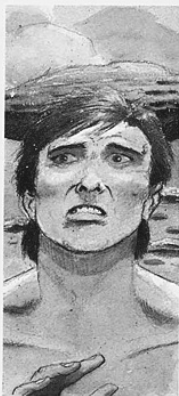
...THE RATTLE OF STONES SUDDENLY SEEMED RHYTHMICAL. NO LONGER A RANDOM SERIES OF NOTES...

...IT WAS A BEAT, A TICK-TAP PULSE...

...NO ACCIDENT... *INTENTION.*



JONATHAN'S SKIN WAS ALMOST LUMINOUS WITH SUN ON IT, THROWN INTO RELIEF BY THE *DARKNESS* BEHIND HIM...

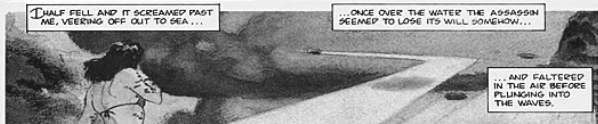


WAIT.

WHAT DARKNESS?

THE STONE SHEARED OFF THE TOP OF HIS HEAD LEAVING HIS MOUTH STILL WIDE, HIS TONGUE ROOTED IN BLOOD...

...AND FLINGING THE REST OF HIS BEAUTY TOWARD ME IN A CLOUD OF WET, HOT DUST.



BUT THE SCREAM WOULD NOT COME. ALL I COULD HEAR WAS THE PATTERN OF STONES TO MY RIGHT AND LEFT.



THEY INTEND TO KILL US ALL FOR INVADING THEIR SACRED GROUND, STONED TO DEATH, LIKE HERETICS... THEN A VOICE...

MAYBE I POINTED TO THE SHEEP PEN, MAYBE NOT.

FOR CHRIST'S SAKE—

...HE SEEMED TO HAVE APPEARED FROM OUT OF THIN AIR... IN ONE HAND A BUCKET AND UNDER HIS ARM A BUNDLE OF COARSELY CUT HAY...

...FOOD FOR SHEEP.

KMAN'S VOICE; BUT NOT KRY'S...



IN THE NAME OF CHRIST WHAT'S GONE ON??

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?



WHATEVER THE REASON, HE SEEMED TO KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING AND? BEGAN TO CLIMB THE BEACH TOWARDS THE CROWN OF THE ISLAND?

HALF BLIND WITH CONFUSION, I FOLLOWED; BUT BEFORE I COULD REACH THE BOULDERS HE WAS OUT OF THEIR SHADOW AGAIN... HIS FACE SUDDENLY SHINING WITH PANIC.



WHO DID THAT?

JONATHAN.



MY CHRIST, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?

KILLING THEIR GIFTS.





JUST
SHEEP.

IN MY HEAD THE INSTANT OF
JONATHAN'S DECAPITATION WAS
PLAYING OVER AND OVER AGAIN.
A LOOP OF SLAUGHTER.



THEY
DEMAND IT,
DON'T YOU SEE,
OR THEY
RISE...

WHO
RISE?

KEL OF THEM, PUT AWAY
WITHOUT GRIEF OR MOUERNING.
BUT THEY'VE GOT THE SEA IN
THEM, IN THEIR HEADS...

IT WAS QUITE PLAIN TO ME
SUDDENLY. THE DEAD WERE
HERE, AS WE KNEW, UNDER
THE STONES. BUT THEY HAD
THE RHYTHM OF THE SEA IN
THEM, AND THEY WOULDN'T
LIE DOWN, SO TO PLACATE
THEM, THESE SHEEP WERE
TETHERED IN A PEN TO BE
OFFERED UP TO THEIR WILLS...

IT WASN'T FOOD THEY WANTED, IT
WAS THE GESTURE OF RECOG-
NITION... AS SIMPLE AS THAT.

THEN THE FAMILIAR
PATTER BEGAN AGAIN,
THE DRUMMING OF
STONES WHICH GREW,
WITHOUT WARNING, INTO
AN EAR-SPLITTING
THUNDER...



... UNDER THE CACOPHANY
THREE OTHER SOUNDS:
SPLASHING, SCREAMING,
AND WHOLESOME
DESTRUCTION...

THEY WERE
AFTER THE
"EMMANUELLE"
... AFTER KAY.



I STARTED TO RUN IN THE DIRECTION OF THE
BOAT, THE BEACH RIPPLING BENEATH MY FEET.



AGAIN, THE TERRIBLE
SCREAMS, WRING FROM
A BODY THAT WAS BEING
BUFFETED AND BROKEN.

WE RAN, THE NOISE OF THE ASSAULT BECAME LOUDER.
STONES DANCED IN THE AIR LIKE FAT BIRDS, BLOCKING
THE SUN BEFORE PLUNGING DOWN TO STRIKE AT SOME
UNSEEN TARGET. MAYBE THE BOAT. MAYBE FLESH ITSELF—

ANGELA'S TORMENTED
SCREAMS HAD CEASED...

THE "EMMANUELLE" AND
ITS HUMAN CONTENTS
WERE BEYOND ALL HOPE
OF SALVATION.

THE STONES BEAT A
TATTOO ON THE
REMAINING STRUCTURE
OF THE HULL...

I SCREAMED
THEN...

THE SHEEP FEEDER WAS
DRAGGING ME NOW AND
I WAS FOLLOWING HIM
BACK OVER THE BEACH...

COME
ON!

... AND THRASHED AT THE LIFELESS BULK OF
ANGELA'S BODY, MAKING IT BOB UP AND DOWN
AS THOUGH A CURRENT WERE BEING PASSED
THROUGH IT. RAY WAS NOWHERE TO BE SEEN.

THE BOAT—
WE CAN GET AWAY
IN THE BOAT!

THE IDEA OF
ESCAPE SEEMED
LUDICROUS...

NO WALLS OF STONES
ROSE TO PREVENT
OUR ESCAPE. NO
SLAUGHTERING HAIL,
EVEN THE ATTACK ON
THE "EMMANUELLE"
HAD CEASED.

HAD THEY SATIATED THEMSELVES
ON JUST THREE VICTIMS?

THE ISLAND
HAD US ON
ITS BACK.
WE WERE ITS OBJECTS
UTTERLY.



THE SHEEP FEEDER, MY SAVIOR, WAS ROWING FOR ALL HE WAS WORTH. THE BEACH RECEDED; WE WERE BEING SET FREE.

HE DREW IN HALF A DOZEN DEEP BREATHS, THEN HE LOOKED UP AT ME, HIS WASTED FACE DRAINED OF EXPRESSION...

ONE DAY IT HAD TO HAPPEN...

...SOMEBODY WOULD SPOT THE WAY WE LIVER. BREAK THE RHYTHM.

WHERE ARE WE GOING?

BACK TO THREE...WE'LL SEE WHAT'S TO BE DONE THERE. FIND SOME WAY TO MAKE AMENDS...TO HELP THEM SLEEP SOUNDLY AGAIN.



DO THEY EAT THE SHEEP?

NO, THEY TAKE THE BEASTS AS A GESTURE OF REMEMBRANCE.

IT'S OUR WAY OF MOURNING THEM.

A BLANK MOMENT PASSED.



THEN THE SCRATCHING...

...A SCRABBLING AT THE UNDERSIDE OF THE BOAT LIKE A MAN'S NAILS TICKLING THE PLANKS TO BE LET IN... NOT ONE MAN... MANY.



IN THE BOAT WE DIDN'T MOVE, WE DIDN'T SPEAK. WE DIDN'T BELIEVE.

EVEN AS WE HEARD THE WORST—WE DIDN'T BELIEVE THE WORST...

NO PLASH OFF
TO STARBOARD!



I TURNED AND HE WAS
COMING TOWARDS ME,
RIGID IN THE WATER,
BORNE UP BY UNSEEN
PUPPETEERS LIKE A
FIGUREHEAD...

... IT WAS KAY,
STONED TO
DEATH, THEN
BROUGHT LIKE
A GLEEFUL
MASCOT, LIKE
PROOF OF
POWER, TO
SPOOK US.

ROW!
ROW OR
THEY'LL KILL
US!



HE SEEMED RESIGNED TO
WHATEVER FATE THEY
HAD IN MIND FOR US...

HE SHOOK HIS HEAD AND
SPAT INTO THE WATER...



I LOOKED AT HIS
FACE: LACERATED
AND BROKEN...
BRUISES AND CUTS
... ONE EYE ALMOST
CLOSED, THE OTHER,
SMASHED FROM
ITS ORBIT...



TWO YARDS FROM THE BOAT,
THE PUPPETEERS LET HIM
SINK BACK INTO THE SEA...

...WHERE HE DISAPPEARED
IN A SWIRL OF PINK WATER.



I NODDED. HE MUST HAVE
FALLEN INTO THE SEA FROM
THE STERN OF THE "EMMAN-
UELLE." NOW HE WAS LIKE
THEM, A DROWNED MAN.
THEY'D ALREADY CLAIMED
HIM AS THEIR PLAYTHING.

BENEATH HIS
FLOATING PHLEGM
SOMETHING MOVED
IN THE DEEP...

PALE FORMS
ROLLED AND
SOMERSAULTED,
TOO FAR DOWN
TO BE CLEARLY
SEEN.



THEY CAME
FLOATING UP
TOWARDS US...
THEIR SEA-
CORRUPTED
FACES BETTER
REFINED WITH
EVERY FATHOM
THEY ROSE.





THE LOOK OF RESIGNATION ON THE SHEEPFEEDER'S FACE DIDN'T FALTER FOR A MOMENT...

... AS THE BOAT WAS SHAKEN BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS...



... AT FIRST GENTLY, THEN SO VIOLENTLY WE WERE BEATEN ABOUT LIKE DOLLS.

A MOMENT LATER THE BOAT TIPPED OVER.



I'D ALWAYS BEEN A FAIRLY STRONG SWIMMER... MY STROKES WERE CONFIDENT AS I BEGAN TO SWIM FROM THE BOAT.

THE SHEEPFEEDER WASN'T AS LUCKY...

LIKE MANY MEN WHO LIVE WITH THE SEA, HE APPARENTLY COULDN'T SWIM.



WITHOUT ISSUING A CRY OR A PRAYER, HE SANK LIKE A STONE.



WHATEVER HOPES OF ESCAPE I HAD, THEY WERE SHORT-LIVED. I FELT A SOFT, OH SO VERY SOFT, BRUSHING OF MY ANKLES AND MY FEET, ALMOST A CARESS...



...THE TOUCH ON MY ANKLE BECAME
A GRASP. I GULPED WHAT I KNEW
TO BE MY LAST BREATH OF AIR...

...AND AS I DID SO...

...RAY'S HEAD BOBBED
NO MORE THAN A YARD
FROM ME...

...I SAW HIS WOUNDS
IN CLINICAL DETAIL.

I SAW MY HARD-EARNED BREATH
FLASHING PAST MY FACE IN A
DISPLAY OF SILVER BUBBLES...

...RAY WAS
BESIDE ME,
CONSOLING,
ATTENTIVE...

...HIS ARMS FLOATED
OVER HIS HEAD AS
THOUGH HE WERE
SURRENDERING.

BELOW ME, THE CORPSES HUGGED MY LEGS. THEY
WANTED ME, OH HOW DEARLY THEY WANTED ME...
RAY WAS HOLDING ME, TOO, WRAPPING ME UP...

...PRESSING
HIS FACE
TO MINE.

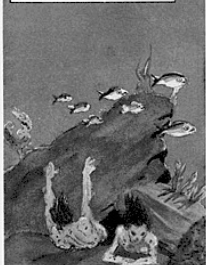
THERE WAS NO PURPOSE IN THE GESTURE, I SUPPOSE. HE DIDN'T
KNOW OR FEEL OR LOVE OR CARE. AND I, LOSING MY LIFE WITH
EVERY SECOND, SUCCLIMBING TO THE SEA ABSOLUTELY, COULDN'T
TAKE PLEASURE IN THE INTIMACY THAT I'D LONGED FOR...

...TOO LATE FOR LOVE; THE SUN-
LIGHT WAS ALREADY A MEMORY.

NOW THE GRIP OF MY COMPANIONS RELAXED,
AND THE GENTLE TIDE HAD ITS WAY WITH
ME. A RAPE OF THE BODY: RAVAGING OF SKIN
AND MUSCLE, GUT, EYE, SINUS, TONGUE, BRAIN.

TIME HAD NO PLACE HERE.

THE DAYS MAY HAVE PASSED
INTO WEEKS, I COULDN'T KNOW.



MAYBE THE SAME HOUR AS
I DIED, OR MAYBE A YEAR
LATER. THE CURRENT SNIFFS
ME OUT OF MY ROCK AND
HAS SOME MERCY.



RAY IS WITH ME... HIS
TIME, TOO, HAS COME.

THE SEA CHANGE HAS OCCURRED;
THERE IS NO TURNING BACK FOR US.

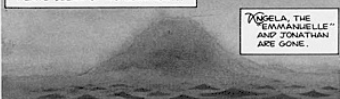


RELENTLESSLY THE TIDE BEARS US—SOME-
TIMES FLOATING, BLOATED PECKS FOR
GULLS. SOMETIMES HALF SUNK AND
NIBBLED BY FISH—BEARS US TOWARDS
THE ISLAND.



WE KNOW THE SURGE OF THE
SHINGLE, AND HEAR, WITHOUT
EARS, THE RATTLE OF THE STONES.

THE SEA HAD LONG SINCE LICKED THE
PLATE CLEAN OF ITS LEAVINGS...

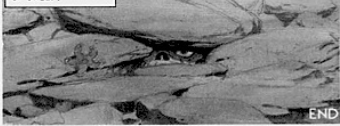


ANGELA, THE
"EMMANUELLE"
AND JONATHAN
ARE GONE.

ONLY WE DROWNED BELONG
HERE, FACE UP UNDER THE
STONES, SOOTHED BY THE
RHYTHM OF TINY WAVES...



...AND THE ABSURD
INCOMPREHENSION
OF SHEEP.



END

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